

Maltreating the Gods, A piece of religious prop*aganda* by The JuanKurse.

When reading occult and pagan literature, it is striking to see how much of it is written in a contemporary North-American Judaeo-Christian mentality. It seems as if our upbringing in this mentality leaves us psychologically and ideologically distant from traditional pagan cosmologies, and we are now hindered in viewing life differently than through this dominant culture's point of view. There are many displays of this phenomenon, one of the most evident being the treatment given to the traditional western pantheons, a.k.a. the Old Gods.

The typical contemporary western mindset (the mainstream) tends to portray a god exclusively as "the boss of." This contrasts with how some old western traditions that see the gods, not only as anthropomorphised bosses, but also as living symbolic figures of the principle from which they are emerging. In the same way can someone contemplate a tree by looking at an oak nut, could we look upon the gods' dasein.

Taking for example the archetypal Lady of the Lake, she is not to be taken at face value as some woman-goddess separate from the lake, administrating it as a distinct entity. She IS the lake inasmuch as she emerges from it; she does not distantly manage the lake's activities and existence, but co-exists with the lake, thereby being intricately involved and interlaced with the lake's activities and existence. As a second example, monotheism: some traditional western views (Neo-Platonic, Hermetic, Gnostic) tends to see that the "All is One" or "God" is to everything as the Lady of the Lake is to the lake. God does not administrate being, God is the principle of Being in itself. God does not oversee existence, God is co-existent with existence itself.

Following the smaragdine principle "as above so below," the same pagan viewpoint is valid in contrast to the popular Cartesian body-soul dichotomy. Our soul is to our body as the Lady of the Lake is to the lake. This dichotomy is only apparent when we categorize ourselves: an 'arm versus leg' dichotomic view of the human body is just as absurd as a body versus soul dichotomy of the human being. Surpassing this dichotomy, Chumbley's Qutub speaks of a tree growing from leaden seeds, bearing golden apples (roots in "hell," branches in "heaven,") as an image of how we can reconcile this spiritual/material dualism, both in ourselves and in the gods. Spiritual immanence transcends itself. The spiritual, rooted in the material plane, henceforth emerges from it. Human beings evolve above causal-material reality all the while being rooted in such. Levi forwards that that which elevates the temple are two: Jakin and Bohas (the archetypes of dualism), and warns us that either one without the other is spiritual suicide. In other words, we are whole beings, simultaneously body and soul.

Completing the cycle to "as below so above," reality is also whole, both material and spiritual. Pursuing the example of the Lady of the Lake, her persona is the self-embodiment of the lake expressed according to our conceptions, as the lake is a self-embodiment of its abstract and spiritual principle on the material plane. The substance versus essence duality of existence makes no sense in many realms of traditional thought, quite to the contrary of contemporary western culture.

We are at a spiritual and intellectual loss if our comprehension of the gods is limited to the dominant culture's. This dominant culture has for so many centuries been challenged by Paganism and Occultism. If of old books were burned, today they are being drowned in a sea of publications and entertainment propaganda. Pagan traditions are no longer stomped out by force, but are being diluted into pop culture, eventually being forgotten. And the Pagans and Occultists are slowly assimilated.

We must not forget the principal advantage of Neo-Paganism: an alternative mindset, a challenge to today's way of thinking. May we open our minds to a reality which ever transcends immediate cultural background, to all that we aren't readily exposed to, and be open to a better, fuller human experience.